

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE

MATERNAL AND PATERNAL INFLUENCES ON ACADEMIC ENGAGEMENT
AND GRADES IN LATINO ADOLESCENTS

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by

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my family and friends who always pushed me to pursue what I love and not the money. To my parents, thank you for all of your support throughout my education. I hope my academic career demonstrates all my hard work. You always supported whatever decisions I made academically and in life. You both taught me how to keep pushing and make the most of situations. To my brother, I dedicate this thesis to you. You have always been there to keep the flame going even when I thought it was out. You constantly reminded me that (1) whatever we set our mind to we can complete, whether in life, academics, or cars; and (2) to always be yourself and never be content because there is always more to do. To my sister-in-law, I can never say thank you enough for teaching me the importance of family. You taught me life is about balance, and that even though being successful is important, it is also very important to make time for family and friends. To my niece and nephew, although you both are young I hope you one day find a career that makes you as happy as psychology, research, and teaching do for me. I hope that someday you find that love and passion for a topic regardless of what it is. Be proud and remember that although there are bumps in the road, I will be there for you both.

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ABSTRACT

MATERNAL AND PATERNAL INFLUENCES ON ACADEMIC ENGAGEMENT AND GRADES IN LATINO ADOLESCENTS

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The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between parental qualities (i.e., parent education level, parent educational aspirations for their child, parental support, and parental monitoring) and adolescents' academics. Using survey data from 363 Latino adolescents ($M_{age} = 14.6$ years) from one high school in Los Angeles, two separate path models were run to examine the contributions of perceived maternal and paternal qualities on indicators of adolescents' academic engagement, and in turn how academic engagement influenced adolescents' self-reported grades.

In the path models for mothers and fathers, academic motivation and educational aspirations were positively related to grades, however academic efficacy was not significantly related to grades. Perceived monitoring and support from both parents were significantly and positively related to academic efficacy and academic motivation.

Perceived educational aspirations by both parents were positively related to educational aspirations. Perceived maternal education level was positively related to educational aspirations.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

In 2015, Latinos comprised 17.6% of the population in the United States, yet Latinos accounted for 24.3% of the students in elementary and high school (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016). The county in the United States with the largest population of Latinos was Los Angeles County (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016). According to the U.S. Census, the percent of Latinos in the United States is expected to increase to 28.6% of the population by 2060. Clearly, research on Latinos is merited.

Parents in immigrant families, including Latino families, often move to the United States with the intent that their children will have better educational opportunities (Perreira, Chapman, & Stein, 2006; Perreira, Harris, & Lee, 2006). Furthermore, immigrant parents set higher educational aspirations for their children (Fuligni & Fuligni, 2007) while also appreciating the educational opportunities that are provided in the United States (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001). Unfortunately, parents are not always able to support their youth's educational success through involvement in school (e.g., attending school meetings or parent/teacher conferences; Suárez-Orozco, 2001). Immigrant parents may be unfamiliar on how to navigate the U.S. school system (Bush, Bohon, & Kim, 2005; Ruiz-de-Velasco, Fix, & Clewell, 2000). Parents' unfamiliarity of navigating through higher education may cause parents to defer the responsibilities to their adolescents' educator (Suárez-Orozco, 2001). Additional factors that may influence parents' participation in school are transportation options, work schedule, other children and a variety of other obligations that may interrupt their ability to participate in school

activities or outreach (Ruiz-de-Velasco et al., 2000). However, parents can influence their children's education through being educational role models and behaviors at home.

Purpose

The goal of this study was to investigate how mothers and fathers can impact Latino adolescents' academic success (i.e., grades). The specific maternal and paternal qualities examined in this study included: parents' educational aspirations for the adolescent, parents' education attainment level, perceived parental support, and perceived parental monitoring. Also, Latino adolescents' individual qualities (i.e., educational aspirations, academic motivation, academic self-efficacy) were examined as potential mediators between parental qualities and Latino adolescents' grades. The results of this study could potentially benefit educators and parent educators who work with Latino families. The results could also provide information on which positive parental qualities (e.g., parental monitoring, parental support, and setting high educational aspirations) should be emphasized.

Definitions

1. Adolescence covers the developmental period between the start of puberty to the beginning of adulthood (Rathus, Nevid, & Fichner-Rathus, 2014).
2. Academic achievement is defined as how well individuals do on their course work based on their course grades earned (Choi, 2005; York, Gibson & Rankin, 2015). Thus, this study will use grades in school as an indicator of academic achievement/success.
3. Academic self-efficacy refers to individuals' beliefs in their ability to be successful in academic endeavors (Solberg et al., 1998).

4. Academic motivation refers to efforts that are directed towards schoolwork, grades education, and school (Sands & Plunkett, 2005, Plunkett & Bámaca-Gómez, 2003).
5. Adolescents' educational aspirations refer to the level of education they hope to acquire (Hanson, 1994).
6. Parental educational aspirations refer to the highest level of education the parents hope their child will acquire (Hanson, 1994).
7. Parents' educational attainment refers to the highest level of education the parents completed (United Nations, 2008).
8. Parental support is defined as the parents' demonstration of positive behaviors directed towards their offspring (Peterson, 2005). Examples of parental support can include praise, verbal approval and encouragement, hugs, kisses, and/or time spent with the youth.
9. Parental monitoring refers to parents knowing (a) how their children spend their time, (b) their children's friends and friends' parents, (c) how their children spend their money, and (d) whether their children are doing their homework (Plunkett & Bámaca-Gómez, 2003).

Theoretical Framework

The current study used Coleman's (1988) social capital theory as a guiding framework. Social capital was defined as resources available to individuals due to their social context. Social capital has two criteria. First, the resources must originate in the social structure. Second, the structure should help individuals advance their abilities and/or talents.

One type of social capital is family capital, which includes relationships

adolescents have with their parents and other members within the family (Coleman, 1988). In this study, family capital includes parents' educational attainment, parents' educational aspirations, perceived parental support, and perceived parental monitoring. According to Coleman, individuals who develop a higher level of social capital are expected to have increased human capital. Thus, family capital can promote human capital (Coleman, 1988). Human capital is defined as the skill and capabilities of an individual. In this study, human capital was operationalized as adolescents' educational aspirations, adolescents' academic motivation, and adolescents' academic self-efficacy.

Hypotheses

Based on the review of literature in Chapter 2, the following research hypotheses were developed (see Figure 1).

1. It was hypothesized that Latino adolescents' educational aspirations, academic efficacy, and academic motivation would be significantly and positively related to their grades.
2. It was hypothesized that Latino adolescents' perceptions of their mothers' and fathers' education level would be significantly and positively related to their educational aspirations, academic efficacy, and academic motivation.
3. It was hypothesized that Latino adolescents' perceptions of their mothers' and fathers' educational aspirations for their children would be significantly and positively related to their educational aspirations, academic efficacy, and academic motivation.
4. It was hypothesized that Latino adolescents' perceptions of maternal and paternal support would be significantly and positively related to their educational aspirations,

academic efficacy, and academic motivation.

5. It was hypothesized that Latino adolescents' perceptions of maternal and paternal monitoring would be significantly and positively related to their educational aspirations, academic efficacy, and academic motivation.
6. It was hypothesized that the parenting variables would be indirectly related to Latino adolescents' grades through their educational aspirations, academic efficacy, and academic motivation.

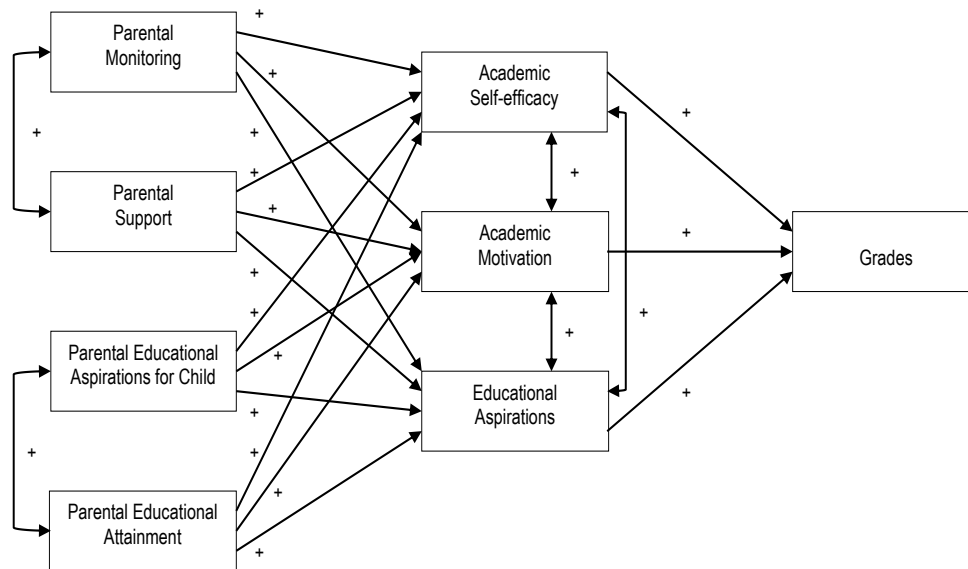


Figure 1. Parenting and individual qualities related to Latino adolescents' GPA

Assumptions

This research study was created based upon certain assumptions. It was assumed that adolescents who participated in the study did not do so under pressure from the researchers, teachers, or administrators. Although, students were asked to participate in their class at a high school, the researchers verbally stated participation was voluntary, and the adolescent assent form and parental consent form also reiterated that participation

was voluntary and participants could drop out anytime with no penalty. Also, the researchers informed the teachers and administrators not to put pressure on the students to participate.

It was also assumed that participants had the ability to read and understand English well enough to respond to the questionnaire accurately. This was assumed because the adolescents could read and understand English due to their enrollment in a high school in which the primary language spoken was English. Also, the language of instruction at the school was English.

There was also the assumption that participants would answer the questions honestly and respond to the questions to the best of their ability. This assumption was made because participants could decide to leave answers blank or not participate, so there was little incentive to give dishonest responses. Also, since the surveys were anonymous, social desirability was less likely to be a concern.

It was also assumed that the measures used in this study worked for different ethnic groups, especially Latinos. This assumption was made because the scales have been shown to be reliable and valid with multiple ethnic groups in previous studies. It was also assumed that the data entry was done without any errors and that no errors occurred during the process of conducting the analyses. This assumption was made because the individuals were trained to code, enter, and verify the coded/entered data for accuracy. Also, the researchers were trained to run the statistical analyses in a graduate program that focuses on research and statistics.

CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Academic Achievement of Latino Adolescents

According to the U.S. Census (2016), 24.3% of K-12 students in the United States are Latino, and this percentage is continuing to increase. Thus, it is important understand what factors can challenge or help Latinos in the academic arena. Although, Latinos have increased in their graduation rates from high school, they continue to have lower graduation rates in comparison to other ethnic groups (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017). Individuals who do not acquire a high school education may have more difficulties in their lives (e.g., quality of life, job placement, financial stability; Ross & Van Willigen, 1997). More education can enhance quality of life in the future (Perreira, Harris, & Lee 2006). Thus, it is important to identify factors that can help encourage Latinos adolescents' academic success.

Social Capital Theory

Social capital refers to resources available to individuals due to their social context (Coleman, 1988). Hence, social capital is context dependent (e.g., socioeconomic status, family resources, community). Resources become available through interactions with other people. Moreover, people continue to expand their social capital through increased human connections (e.g., interactions with friends, teachers, neighbors, family). For this reason, social capital has a strong influence on the resources available because it involves multiple aspects in peoples' interpersonal lives (Coleman, 1988).

A primary type of social capital for children and adolescents is family capital (Coleman, 1988). Family capital includes relationships youth have with their parents and

other members within the family (Coleman, 1988). According to Coleman, individuals who develop a higher level of social capital are expected to have increased human capital. Thus, family capital can promote human capital (Coleman, 1988). Human capital refers to a set of acquired skills individuals have that allow them to perform and/or succeed in a given situation (Coleman, 1988).

Social capital increases over time during adolescence (Coleman, 1988). Thus, adolescents have increased opportunities to improve their human capital. As individuals develop additional social connections, they learn new skills from those individuals, which expand on their human capital. For example, when a parent and child interact during the process of completing homework, there is an opportunity for human capital to increase. During this time, parents who have positive interactions with their children can increase the likelihood that the adolescent will be more open to listening to new suggestions from the parent. Thus, this interaction can promote enhanced human capital that could lead to more optimal development in other domains (e.g., school, peer groups).

Human Capital and Academic Achievement

Academic Achievement

One important aspect of human capital for future success is a person's level of academic achievement. For Latino youth, especially those from immigrant families, academic achievement is an indicator of their future opportunities (Suárez-Orozco, 2001). For example, adolescents who are more successful in the academic arena are more likely to pursue higher education (Dornbusch, Ritter, & Steinberg, 1991) and have better occupational success, and decreased risk of substance abuse, delinquency, emotional problems, and behavioral problems (Annunziata, Hogue, Faw, & Liddle, 2006; Jansen &

Bruinsma, 2005). Therefore, it is important to research parental qualities that keep Latino adolescents engaged in academics and how these variables relate to their grades (an indicator of academic achievement).

Educational Aspirations and Grades

One indicator of human capital used in this study was adolescents' educational aspirations. According to Hanson (1994), educational aspiration is defined as the level of education the adolescent hopes to achieve. According to Perreira, Chapman, and Stein (2006), Latino youth often make an effort to reach and even surpass the educational attainment of their parents. To surpass their parents' education, Latino youth may strive to acquire skills to make good grades in school. From the perspective of Coleman's (1988) interpretation of human capital, adolescents' educational aspirations encourage them to increase their personal skill set and capabilities.

Liu, Cheng, Chen, and Wu (2009) conducted a longitudinal study using a sample of 2000 Taiwanese adolescent students. They found that adolescents in 8th grade educational aspirations are significantly related to their own academic achievements. It is their suggestion that adolescents' educational aspirations play a critical role in adolescents' academic achievement. Aldous (2006) conducted a longitudinal study with 678 Hispanic students from several public and private schools across the United States. She found that adolescents scored higher on standardized testing (e.g., math and reading) when they had higher educational aspirations.

In summary, these studies showed that youths' educational aspirations are related to their grades. Hence, it was hypothesized that Latino adolescents' reports of their educational aspirations would be significantly and positively related to their grades.

Academic Motivation and Grades

Another indicator of human capital in the academic arena is academic motivation. Academic motivation refers to the effort directed towards school, as well as the value that individuals place on their grades and education (Plunkett & Bámaca-Gómez, 2003; Sands & Plunkett, 2005). Academic motivation has a positive relationship to grades. When adolescents are more motivated academically, they strive harder to succeed in school. Thus, they generally make better grades.

Plunkett, Behnke, Sands, and Choi (2009) collected self-report survey data from 1,245 adolescents (57.5% Latino) ranging from 9th to 12th grade in 4 different high schools in Los Angeles County. They found that academic motivation was significantly and positively related to self-report grades. According to Plunkett et al., youth will make better grades when they stay academically engaged and stay more focused on schoolwork. Studies using grades from school records have also found a positive relationship between academic motivation and grades, including with Latino adolescents. For example, Henry, Merten, Plunkett, and Sands (2008) collected school record and self-report data with a sample of 502 Latinos adolescents from immigrant families in Los Angeles. They found that adolescents' reports of their academic motivation were significantly and positively related to their grade point average (collected from school records).

Longitudinal studies with Latinos have also shown that academic motivation relates to future grades. For example, Alfaro, Umaña-Taylor, Gonzales-Backen, Bámaca, and Zeiders (2009) conducted a longitudinal study using a sample of 221 Latinos adolescents from five schools in the Midwest. In both waves of data, they found that

academic motivation was significantly and positively related to Latino boys' and girls' grades (from school records) within the same time period. In other words, academic motivation at time 1 predicted grades at time 1, and academic motivation at time 2 predicted grades at time 2.

In summary, these studies showed that academic motivation is an important predictor of adolescents' grades, regardless of whether the grades are from self-report or from school records and regardless of whether the study is cross-sectional or longitudinal. Thus, it was hypothesized that Latino adolescents' reports of academic motivation would be significantly and positively related to their grades.

Academic Efficacy and Grades

Academic self-efficacy is third type of human capital related to academic achievement (e.g., grades). Academic self-efficacy is defined as individuals' beliefs in their own ability to be successful in academics (Solberg et al., 1998). When adolescents believe they can be successful in their academic endeavors, they are more likely to set and achieve academic goals (e.g., better grades).

Studies with college students have found a positive relationship between academic self-efficacy and academic outcomes. For example, Choi (2005) conducted a study using a cross-sectional study using a sample of 230 college-aged students. The sample was ethnically mixed with the majority of students identifying as Caucasian (62%). The results indicated that academic self-efficacy was significantly and positively correlated to students' grades.

A study conducted by Feldman and Kubota (2014) examined 89 college-aged students in northern California on whether academic self-efficacy was related to their

self-reported grade point average (GPA). They found that there was a significant positive relationship between academic-self-efficacy and GPA. Feldman and Kubota suggested that this relation occurs because academic self-efficacy examines students' anticipated behaviors in an academic setting that will lead to higher GPA. Chemers, Hu, and Garcia (2001) conducted a longitudinal study that sampled 373 first-year college students at wave 1 and 256 students at wave 2. They found support for a direct relationship from self-efficacy to students' academic performance measured by their GPA.

Studies with young adolescents have also found a link between academic self-efficacy and grades. For example, Niehaus, Rudasill, and Adelson (2012) conducted a cross-sectional study of 47 adolescents in middle schools in an afterschool program in the Midwestern United States. Data were primarily self-report except for students' grades, which came from the schools' database. The researchers found that academic self-efficacy was a significant predictor of adolescents' grades. Adolescents who reported higher levels of academic self-efficacy attended school more frequently, which may partially explain why they did better academically.

Based on the studies discussed, academic self-efficacy plays a significant role in predicting grades in samples of college students and adolescents. For this reason, it was hypothesized that academic self-efficacy would be significantly and positively related to Latino adolescents' grades.

Parent Qualities and Adolescents' Academics

The ideology of familism plays a vital factor in Latino households (Halgunseth, 2004). Specifically, Latinos place a large emphasis on the family, and family needs are often more important than individual needs (Williams & Araujo Dawson, 2011). Thus,

family qualities are likely very important in Latino adolescents' academic values (e.g., academic motivation, academic self-efficacy, educational aspirations). Behnke, Gonzalez, and Cox (2010) discussed that Latino adolescents often have a challenging time seeing the economic benefit to spending additional time in school. However, Latino parents can be instrumental in promoting the value of education to their offspring (Behnke et al., 2010). Thus, parental qualities are sources of family capital and were the focus of this thesis.

Parental Education Level and Academics

One type of family capital is the parents' educational attainment level (i.e., highest level of education the parents completed; United Nations, 2008). Parents with higher education have more resources to help their offspring (e.g., knowledge of the education system, ability to help, financial resources to hire tutors), and they may be educational role models for their children (Plunkett & Bámaca-Gómez, 2003) Thus, parents with higher educational levels can be a form of family capital that can promote their adolescents' human capital. Consequently, parents' education level could promote higher academic motivation, academic self-efficacy, and/or educational aspirations.

Cross-sectional and longitudinal studies with Latino samples have shown that parental education level is related to academic outcomes. For example, Plunkett and Bámaca-Gómez (2003) conducted a cross-sectional study using self-report data from 273 adolescents who identified as Mexican American. The results indicated that there was a significant and positive correlation between mothers' and fathers' educational attainment and their adolescents' educational aspirations. Additionally, they found a significant correlation between mothers' educational attainment and adolescents' academic

motivation. According to Plunkett and Bámaca-Gómez, parents with higher education may be education role models for their offspring. Also, parents with higher education may have more financial resources to help adolescents be successful in the academic arena.

Williams and Araujo Dawson (2011) examined data from a nationally-representative sample of 2840 Latino adolescents who were part of the National Population Early Childhood Longitudinal Study. They found that students whose parents and/or guardians who did not complete high school scored significantly lower in math and reading tests compared to those adolescents whose parents and/or guardians completed high school. Altchul (2012) conducted a longitudinal study using a national sample of 1,609 Mexican American adolescents. Altchul found mothers' education level directly and positively related to adolescents' exam score in 10th grade. Fathers' education level was indirectly related to their adolescents' exam scores through the income of the family.

Based on results from cross-sectional and longitudinal studies with Latinos, it was hypothesized that the education level of mothers and fathers would be significantly and positively related to academic motivation, academic self-efficacy, and educational aspirations of Latino adolescents.

Parental Educational Aspirations and Academics

Another type of family capital is parents' educational aspirations for their children (i.e., the level of education parents hope their child will achieve; Hanson, 1994). Studies have shown that parental desires for their adolescents to receive higher education relates to greater opportunity for educational success. Conversely, when parents do not have

higher educational aspirations for their adolescent the chance for them to dropout increases (Coleman, 1988).

According to Aldous (2006), individuals who come from a lower socioeconomic household are more encouraged to obtain a job and start a family. However, parents with high aspirations for their offspring are less likely to push their children to leave school prematurely to follow careers. Aldous found that Latino parents who had higher educational aspirations for their offspring had adolescents who did better in reading and math.

Often Latino families relocate to the United States with the intention that their adolescents receive a higher education than what is available in the parents' birth country (Perreira, Chapman, & Stein, 2006). Due to parents' desires that their adolescents surpass their own level of education, it is expected that most parents will have high educational aspirations for their children. This, in turn, will relate to the educational aspirations of the adolescents, which relates to their academic success, such as grades (Perreira, Chapman, & Stein, 2006). Thus, a central theme in parents' decisions to immigrate to the United States is to provide better educational opportunities for their children because parents see education as the crucial to their children's success (Fuligni & Fuligni, 2007).

Using cross-sectional, self-report data from 273 Mexican origin adolescents in Los Angeles, Plunkett and Bámaca-Gómez (2003) found that there was a significant and positive correlation between parents' educational attainment and their adolescents' educational aspirations. Similarly, Henry et al. (2008) conducted a cross-sectional study with 502 Latino adolescents' in the greater Los Angeles area. They found that perceived maternal educational aspirations for their adolescent were related to their grade point

averages (from school records). Chavira, Cooper, and Vasquez-Salgado (2016) conducted a study with 24 immigrant Latino adolescents. They found that the educational aspirations of both parents related to adolescents' educational aspirations.

Based on the literature discussed above, it was hypothesized that the perceived maternal and paternal educational aspirations for their adolescents would be significantly and positively related to academic motivation, academic self-efficacy, and educational aspirations of Latino adolescents.

Parental Support and Academics

Parental support is another form of family capital. Parental support refers to parents' degree of assisting or validating their children's experiences (Sharp, Wilard, Barnes, Tillery, Long, & Phipps, 2017). According to Peterson (2005), the positive influence of parental support is "perhaps the closest thing to a general law of parenting" (p. 40). Other names for parental support are parental warmth and nurturance (Peterson, 2005). Parental support can be demonstrated verbally (e.g., praise, approval, encouragement), physically (e.g., hugs, kisses), and time spent with the youth that is perceived to be a positive experience (Peterson, 2005). Parental support is examined through the adolescents' experiences of warmth and affection from their parents while also including the child's sense of value while communicating with their parents. (Peterson, Rollins, & Thomas, 1985). Peterson (2005) suggested that youth who perceive their parents to be supportive develop a base for which they learn to start and achieve goals.

Not surprisingly, studies have found that parental support is related to adolescents' academics. For example, Graziano, Bonino, and Cattellino (2009) conducted

a study with 1118 Italian adolescents from the northwestern part of Italy. They found that perceived parental support was related to adolescents' academic self-efficacy. Studies with Latinos in the United States have also found a link between parental support and academics. Using data from 273 Mexican origin adolescents in Los Angeles, Plunkett and Bámaca-Gómez (2003) found a significant and positive correlation between perceived support from mothers and fathers on adolescents' academic motivation. Similarly, Garcia-Reid, Reid, and Peterson (2005) conducted a study with 226 Latino adolescents from the Northeastern United States. They found that parental support (e.g., mother/father composite score) was significantly and positively related to adolescents' school engagement.

Based on the ideas presented above, it was hypothesized that perceived support from mothers and fathers would be significantly and positively related to academic motivation, academic self-efficacy, and educational aspirations of Latino adolescents.

Parental Monitoring and Academics

Parental monitoring is another form of family capital that has been examined in relation to academic outcomes. Parental monitoring refers to parents' knowledge about various areas of their offspring's lives, such as knowing about their friendships, activities, money, and homework (Plunkett & Bámaca-Gómez, 2003). The perception that parents are knowledgeable in their children's activities is beneficial to the child. It is viewed as a form of interest in the child's life, which encourages them to continue to do well in school (Plunkett et al., 2009).

Using data from 1,245 students in four high schools in Los Angeles, Plunkett, Behnke, Sands, and Choi (2009) found that perceived monitoring from both mothers and

fathers were significantly and positively related to boys' and girls' academic motivation and self-reported grades. They also found that academic motivation mediated the relationships between perceptions of maternal and paternal monitoring with grades. Plunkett and colleagues offered numerous explanations for why monitoring was related to academic outcomes, such as monitoring keeps youth focused on academic tasks and away from delinquent activities, and that monitoring by parents was an overt indication by the parents of the importance of education.

Studies with Latino samples have found similar results. Using data from 273 Mexican origin adolescents in Los Angeles, Plunkett and Bámaca-Gómez (2003) found a significant and positive correlation between mothers' and fathers' monitoring on adolescents' academic motivation. They suggested that parents who monitor their offspring can keep them focused on academic endeavors and away from behaviors that detract from academics.

Using self-report survey data from 502 Latinos adolescents, Henry et al. (2008) found that maternal and paternal monitoring were positively related to grade point average (collected from school records). They also found that academic motivation mediated the relationship between parental monitoring and Latinos adolescents' grades. Thus, maternal monitoring and paternal monitoring were positively related to academic motivation, which in turn, positively predicted grades.

Based on the literature and ideas presented above, it was hypothesized that perceived monitoring by mothers and fathers would be significantly and positively related to academic motivation, academic self-efficacy, and educational aspirations of Latino adolescents.

Parenting, Academic Engagement, and Grades

As pointed out in some of the studies cited in the previous sections, the relationship between perceived parenting (i.e., sources of family capital) and grades may be mediated by human capital qualities (e.g., academic motivation, academic efficacy, and educational aspirations). For example, high educational aspirations of the parents for their children can increase the children's academic motivation and aspirations, which in turn result in better grades. Similarly, parents with higher educational attainment can provide resources that help their children focus on academic tasks (e.g., tutoring), which result in better grades. And parenting behaviors, such as support and monitoring, can promote self-confidence and/or a valuing of education, which increase academic engagement, ultimately resulting in better grades. As shown in Figure 1, this study also examined whether the perceived qualities of mothers and fathers (i.e., family capital) were indirectly related to grades through academic motivation, academic efficacy, and educational aspirations (i.e., three sources of human capital).

CHAPTER III
METHODOLOGY

Procedures

Using a cross-sectional design, data were collected using self-report surveys from students at a high school in Los Angeles, California. The principal at the high school gave permission for the data to be collected. The research team met with 9th grade teachers from the high school to go through the process of the data collection process. After, the teachers agreed to have their classes participate in the study, trained researchers distributed parental consent forms to the students in their classes. The consent forms also included a letter that explained the process the research would undertake for their children. The students were instructed to take the consent forms home to be signed by the parent or guardian. The teachers collected the consent forms for the researchers.

Two weeks later, the researchers returned to the classroom. After the consent forms had been collected, adolescent assent forms were distributed. The questionnaires were administered to those students who had signed parental consent and adolescent assent forms. The survey was administered during the students' classes. Trained bilingual researchers (English, Spanish) walked around the room during data collection in case any students had questions. The students who choose or were unable to participate in the study were given a crossword that was designed to provide information on transitioning between high school and college. The students who participated were also given the crossword after they completed the survey. After data collection, the surveys were taken back to a university lab. Trained research assistants coded and entered the data entry. The data that were coded and entered were verified to assure accuracy.

Sample Characteristics

Analyses were conducted using data from 363 Latino adolescents. The sample was split between boys (44.9%) and girls (55.1%). Participants' ages ranged from 14 to 16 years ($M_{age} = 15.6$), with the primary age being 15 (50.7%). Most of the participants (99.2%) were in the 9th grade, and 0.8% of the participants were 10th graders. In regards to family form, 70.2% were in two-parent, intact families, 15.2% were in single parent families, 12.4% were in stepparent family, and 2.3% were in other family forms.

Adolescents reported birth countries where as follows: 84.6% were born in the United States, 15.4% were born in other countries, and 0.0% did not report their birth country. In regards to parents' birth country, 69.4% of mothers and 74.9% of fathers were born in Mexico, 14.3% of mothers and 12.2% of fathers were born in El Salvador, 7.4% of mothers and 4.7% of fathers were born in Guatemala, 5.5% of mothers and 5.0% of fathers were born in United States, and 3.4% of mothers and 3.5% of fathers were born in other countries.

Measurement

Demographic information was gathered using basic demographic items. Other variables were measured using preexisting measures that have been used in other studies with Latino adolescents.

Grades

Grades were measured using report card grades from the teachers. A school data specialist provided grades for each class at the end of the term when the students completed the survey. Grades were averaged to provide a grade point average for each of the adolescents who participated using a 6-point scale ranging from 0 = *F* to 4 = *A*.

Adolescents' Educational Aspirations

Adolescents' were asked to report the educational aspiration they have for themselves with the following item: "What is the highest level of education you wish to complete?" The response options follow: 1 = *no education completed*, 2 = *some elementary school (1st -5th grade)*, 3 = *some middle school (6th-8th)*, 4 = *some high school (9th-12th)*, 5 = *high school graduate (or GED)*, 6 = *some college, no degree*, 7 = *associate's degree or technical school*, 8 = *bachelor's degree*, 9 = *master's degree*, 10 = *professional school degree (doctor /law)*, and 11 = *graduate degree (Ph.D. Ed.D.)*.

Adolescents' Academic Motivation

A 5-item scale was used to measure the amount of effort adolescents put into school, how important grades are to them, whether they like school, and the extent to which they finish homework on time (Plunkett & Bámaca-Gómez, 2003). A sample item follows: "Education is important to me". The items had the following response options: 1 = *strongly disagree*, 2 = *disagree*, 3 = *agree*, and 4 = *strongly agree*. The five items were averaged to generate a mean score for each participant. Higher scores indicated higher academic motivation. The Cronbach alpha for academic motivation was .727.

Adolescents' Academic Efficacy

An 11-item scale was used to measure adolescents' academic self-efficacy (Bandura, 1990). A sample item follows: "How confident are you in your ability to get yourself to do schoolwork". The response choices follow: 1 = *not confident at all*, 2 = *somewhat confident*, 3 = *moderately confident*, 4 = *confident*, and 5 = *very confident*. The items were averaged with higher scores indicating greater academic efficacy. The Cronbach alpha for academic self-efficacy was .885.

Parents' Educational Attainment

Adolescents were asked to select the highest level of education their mother and father attained. The response options follow: 1 = *no education completed*, 2 = *some elementary school (1st -5th grade)*, 3 = *some middle school (6th -8th)*, 4 = *some high school (9th -12th)*, 5 = *high school graduate (or GED)*, 6 = *some college, no degree*, 7 = *associate's degree or technical school*, 8 = *bachelor's degree*, 9 = *master's degree*, 10 = *professional school degree (doctor /law)*, and 11 = *graduate degree (Ph.D. Ed.D.)*.

Perceived Parental Educational Expectations for their Youth

Adolescents' were asked to report the highest level of education they thought their mothers and fathers wanted them to complete. The response options follow: 1 = *no education completed*, 2 = *some elementary school (1st -5th grade)*, 3 = *some middle school (6th -8th)*, 4 = *some high school (9th -12th)*, 5 = *high school graduate (or GED)*, 6 = *some college, no degree*, 7 = *associate's degree or technical school*, 8 = *bachelor's degree*, 9 = *master's degree*, 10 = *professional school degree (doctor /law)*, and 11 = *graduate degree (Ph.D. Ed.D.)*.

Perceived Support from Mothers and Fathers

A 4-item parental support scale was used to measure how parents communicate to their youth a sense of being valued, feelings of warmth, and feelings of affection (Bush, Peterson, Cobas, & Supple, 2002; Henry & Peterson, 1995; Peterson, Rollins, & Thomas, 1985). Participants responded to each item in the scale twice, once for each parent figure (i.e., mother, father). A sample item follows: "This parent has made me feel that he/she would be there if I needed him/her." Participants had the options to respond: 1 = *strongly disagree*, 2 = *disagree*, 3 = *agree*, or 4 = *strongly agree*. The items were averaged to

create perceived support scores for each parent. A Cronbach alpha of .775 was found for perceived maternal support, and a Cronbach alpha of .769 was found for perceived paternal support.

Perceived Monitoring from Mothers and Fathers

A 4-item scale was used to measure perceived parental monitoring of adolescents' activities, friendship, money, and homework (Plunkett & Bámaca-Gómez, 2003). Participants had to respond to each of the items in the scale twice, once about each parent figure (i.e., mother, father). A sample item follows: "This parent monitors whether I do my homework." Participants had the options to respond as follows: 1 = *strongly disagree*, 2 = *disagree*, 3 = *agree*, or 4 = *strongly agree*. The items were averaged to create perceived monitoring scores for each parent. Perceived maternal monitoring had a Cronbach alpha of .798, and for perceived paternal monitoring a Cronbach alpha of .826 was found

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Path Analyses

A path analysis was used to determine the relationship between the variables in Figure 1. Specifically, two separate path models were run to examine the contributions of mothers and fathers on their adolescents' academic engagement, and in turn how academic engagement influenced adolescents' self-reported grades. The independent variables were not overly correlated (i.e., $r = .02$ to $.23$ for mothers' variables, and $r = .01$ to $.25$ for fathers' variables), thus multicollinearity was not an issue, so comparisons were done.

Prior to examining the path analysis, data screening was performed for both univariate and multivariate normality. The data were within the acceptable range for the univariate criteria's, meaning it was safe to assume univariate normality. When examining multivariate normality, Mahalanobis distance was used. No chi square values came out statistically significant, suggesting multivariate normality was not violated.

Path analyses were done with EQS version 6.2 using maximum likelihood estimation. The criteria that were used to assess model fit are as follows; chi square goodness-of-fit test (χ^2), Root Mean Squared Error of Approximation (RMSEA), Standardized Root Mean-Square Residual (SRMR), and Comparative Fit Index (CFI). A model was considered to have reasonable fit when there was a nonsignificant chi square, $RMSEA < .06$ and $SRMR < .08$, and $CFI > .95$ (Kline, 2011).

Overall, the mothers' model fit the data moderately well; $\chi^2(8) = 20.366$, $p = .009$; $CFI = .966$, $RMSEA = .066$, and $SRMR = .046$. As shown in Figure 2, academic

motivation and educational aspirations were positively related to grades, however academic efficacy was not significantly related to grades. Perceived maternal monitoring and maternal support were both significantly and positively related to academic efficacy and academic motivation. Perceived maternal educational aspirations and maternal education level were positively related to educational aspirations. Perceived maternal monitoring and support were indirectly related to grades through adolescents' academic motivation. Also, mothers' educational aspirations for their adolescent and mothers' educational attainment were indirectly related to grades through adolescents' educational aspirations.

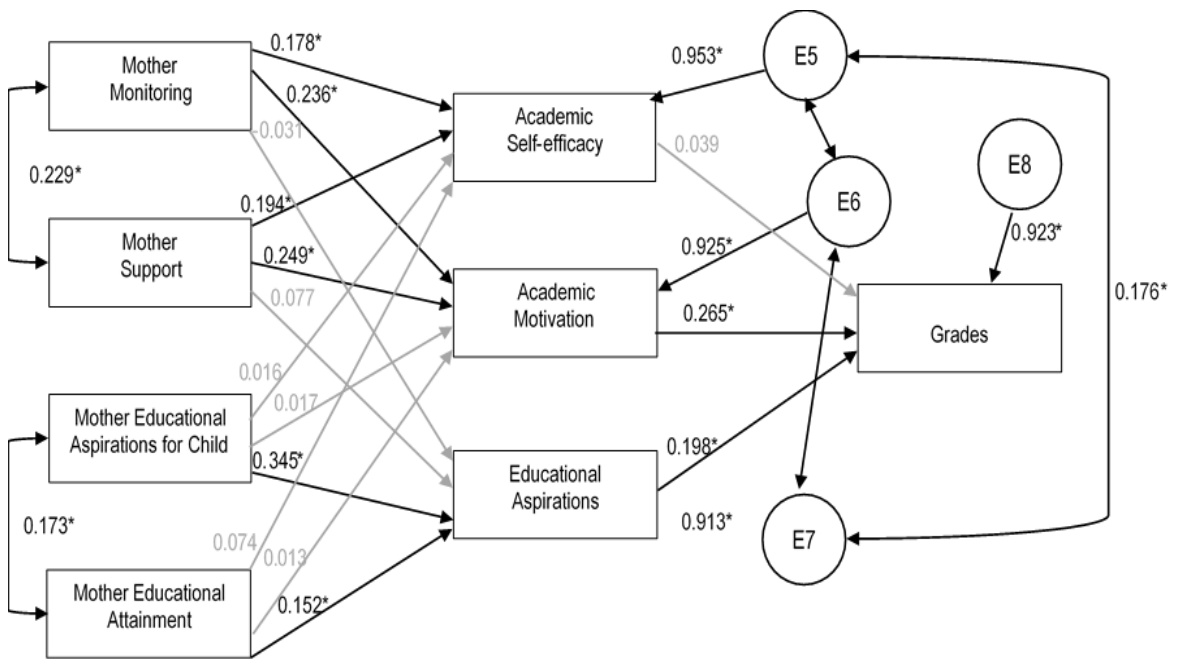


Figure 2. Latino adolescents' perceptions of maternal qualities, academic engagement, and grades (standardized betas). * $p < .05$.

The fathers' model fit the data moderately well; $\chi^2(8) = 19.234$, $p = .014$, CFI = .965, RMSEA = .067, and SRMR = .044. As shown in Figure 3, academic motivation and educational aspirations were positively related to grades, however academic efficacy was

not significantly related to grades. Perceived paternal monitoring and paternal support were both significantly and positively related to academic efficacy and academic motivation. Perceived paternal educational aspirations were positively related to educational aspirations. Perceived educational attainment by fathers was not significantly related to any of the academic engagement variables. Perceived paternal monitoring and support were indirectly related to grades through adolescents' academic motivation. Fathers' educational aspirations for their adolescent were indirectly related to grades through adolescents' educational aspirations.

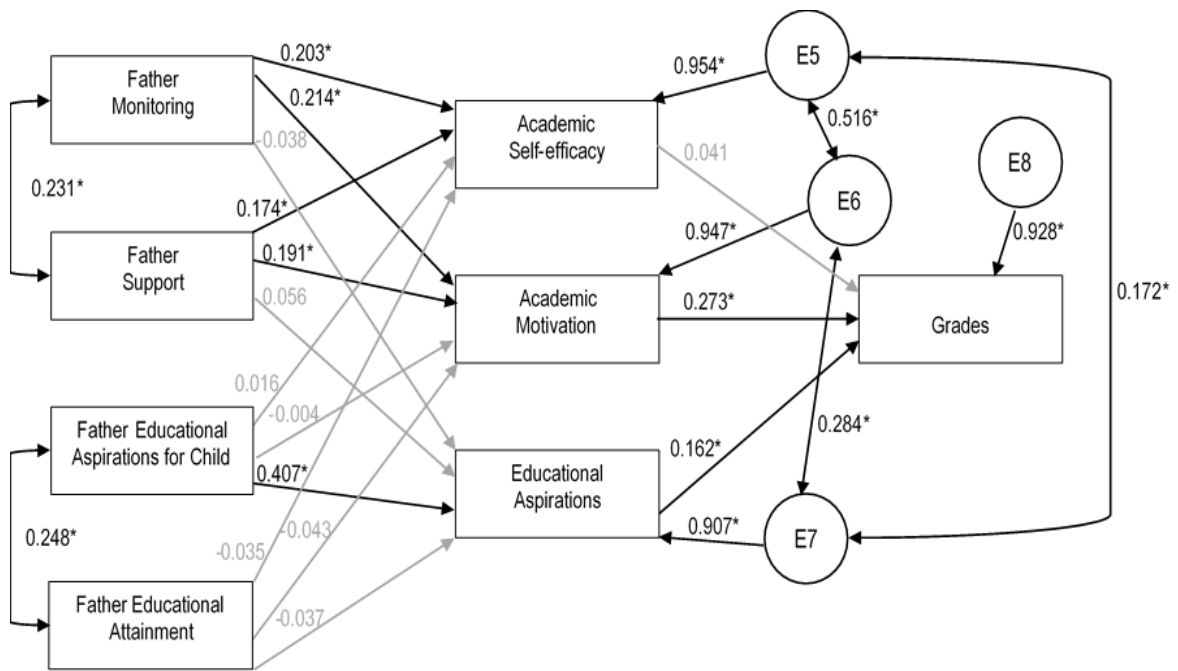


Figure 3. Latino adolescents' perceptions of paternal qualities, academic engagement, and grades (standardized betas). * $p < .05$.

Pearson Correlations

Pearson correlations were conducted to explore the strength and direction of the bivariate relationships between each of the independent and dependent variables.

Pearson correlations were conducted separately for reports of mothers and fathers.

Pearson's correlations were conducted using SPSS 24.0 for Windows.

Pearson Correlations for the Mothers' Data

As hypothesized, educational aspirations, academic motivation, and academic efficacy were significantly and positively correlated to grades (see Table 1). Also, as hypothesized, perceived maternal support was significantly and positively related to adolescents' grades, educational aspirations, academic motivation, and academic efficacy. Only partial support was found for the hypotheses regarding the other maternal variables. Specifically, mothers' education level was significantly and positively correlated to adolescents' educational aspirations and academic efficacy. Perceived maternal educational aspirations for child were significantly and positively correlated to adolescents' educational aspirations. Perceived monitoring by mothers was significantly and positively related to adolescents' academic motivation.

Table 1
Summary of Pearson Correlations on Latino Adolescents' Reports of Maternal Qualities, Academic Engagement, and Grades ($n = 363$)

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Grades	1.00						
2. Educational aspirations	.257**	1.00					
3. Academic motivation	.326**	.242**	1.00				
4. Academic efficacy	.220**	.199**	.573**	1.00			
5. Mothers' education	-.054	.195**	.049	.104*	1.00		
6. Mothers' educational aspirations for child	.073	.369**	.066	.065	.168**	1.00	
7. Mothers support	.168**	.112*	.307**	.229**	.022	.127*	1.00
8. Mothers' monitoring	.029	.048	.294**	.228**	.124*	.129*	.231**

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Pearson Correlations for the Fathers' Data

As hypothesized, educational aspirations, academic motivation, and academic efficacy were significantly and positively correlated to grades (see Table 2). Only partial support was found for the hypotheses regarding the paternal variables. Specifically, fathers' education level was significantly and negatively correlated with grades and positively correlated to adolescents' educational aspirations. Perceived paternal educational aspirations for child were significantly and positively correlated to

educational aspirations. Perceived paternal support was significantly and positively correlated to adolescents' grades, academic motivation, and academic efficacy. Perceived monitoring by fathers was significantly and positively related to adolescents' academic motivation and academic efficacy.

Table 2
Summary of Pearson Correlations on Latino Adolescents' Reports of Paternal Qualities, Academic Engagement, and Grades (n = 340)

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Grades	1.00						
2. Educational aspirations	.257**	1.00					
3. Academic motivation	.326**	.242**	1.00				
4. Academic efficacy	.220**	.199**	.573**	1.00			
5. Fathers' education	-.141**	.109*	-.052	-.007	1.00		
6. Fathers' educational aspirations for child	.034	.395**	.025	.049	.246**	1.00	
7. Fathers support	.170**	.099	.248**	.229**	-.006	.123*	1.00
8. Fathers' monitoring	.076	.022	.274**	.261**	.008	.114*	.252**

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

This study used social capital theory as a guide for the conceptual model (see Figure 1). The purpose was to examine whether adolescents' perceptions of family capital were indirectly related to grades through their forms of human capital. Specifically, the study examined whether adolescents' perceptions of maternal and paternal qualities (i.e., monitoring, support, educational aspirations for their adolescent, and educational attainment) were indirectly related to grades through adolescents' academic engagement (i.e., academic self-efficacy, academic motivation, and educational aspirations).

Summary of Results

The path analyses indicated that adolescents' academic motivation and educational aspirations were directly related to grades. Also, perceived support and monitoring from mothers and fathers were significantly and positively related to adolescents' academic self-efficacy and academic motivation. Also, perceived support and monitoring from mothers and fathers were indirectly related to grades through academic motivation. Next, perceived educational aspirations for youth from mothers and fathers were directly related to adolescents' educational aspirations and indirectly related to grades through educational aspirations. And finally, mothers' educational attainment was significantly and positively related to adolescents' educational aspirations, and indirectly related to grades through educational aspirations. The results demonstrate that family capital can promote Latino adolescents' human capital, which can influence their grades.

Discussion

As hypothesized, educational aspirations and academic motivation of adolescents (i.e., two indicators of human capital) were significantly and positively related to their grades. When Latino adolescents aspire to higher educational attainment, it might encourage them to excel in school to meet their educational goals. Conversely, Latino adolescents with low educational aspirations may not see the point in working hard at school, and thus receive lower grades. Similarly, Latino adolescents who are academically motivated try harder in school and stay focused on academic tasks, such as homework. This commitment to educational endeavors ultimately resulted in better grades.

Contrary to the hypothesis, adolescents' academic self-efficacy was not related to adolescents' grades. A potential explanation for academic self-efficacy not being significantly related to adolescents' grades is that the other two predictors (i.e., academic motivation and educational aspirations) may contribute more towards adolescents' grades. Thus, it may overshadow the contribution of academic self-efficacy on adolescents' grades.

As hypothesized, perceived support from mothers and fathers were directly related to Latino adolescents' academic self-efficacy and indirectly related to grades through their adolescents' academic motivation. When Latino adolescents see their parents as warm and nurturing, they may feel a supportive base at home (Peterson, 2005) that can buffer negative experiences at school or motivate them to stay focused on academic tasks. Also, Latino youth who feel warmth and nurturance from parents may want to do well in school as a way to give back to their parents, especially immigrant

Latino parents who might have sacrificed their own livelihood for educational opportunities for their children.

As hypothesized, perceived monitoring from mothers and fathers were related to adolescents' academic self-efficacy and academic motivation, and indirectly related to grades through academic motivation. Adolescents who see their parents as keeping track of their friends and activities may be more likely to stay focused on academic tasks and less likely to engage in behaviors that are not conducive to education (e.g., drinking alcohol, using drugs, and other delinquent activities (Plunkett & Bámaca, 2003).

Not surprisingly, perceived educational aspirations for their youth by mothers and fathers were significantly and positively related to adolescents' educational aspirations, and indirectly related to grades. Latino parents who set high educational aspirations for their children are conveying the value of education in the home. Thus, when parents have low aspirations for education, then the adolescents may not see the value of education and not try in school. The connection between parents' educational aspirations for their children and the adolescents' educational aspirations seems especially relevant in Latino immigrant families since both the parents and youth often want to surpass their parents' education levels (Perreira, Chapman, & Stein, 2006).

In the path analyses, mothers' educational attainment, but not fathers' education, was significantly and positively related to adolescents' educational aspirations, and indirectly related to grades through educational aspirations. One explanation is that mothers often have more contact with their children, so they might be more of an educational role model in the home. However, it should be noted that fathers' educational attainment was significantly related to educational aspirations in the correlations. So, it is

possible that the influence of fathers' educational aspirations overshadows their educational attainment in the path analyses.

Limitations and Research Implications

Although this study found substantial support for some of the hypotheses, there are limitations in the study that should be acknowledged. The first limitation is the way in which data were collected. Data were collected in one high school in southern California, which limits the generalizability of the results. To develop greater generalizability, future studies should collect data in multiple geographic areas in the United States.

Next, data were collected using self-report surveys. Adolescents may have responded in a socially desirable way, which may inflate their reported scores about their attributes of their parents. Additionally, having responses from both adolescents and parents in relation to their parents' perceived qualities would be beneficial for comparison between how adolescents perceive their parents' qualities and how parents view their own qualities.

This study used a cross-sectional design, which means data were only collected at one timepoint. It would be beneficial to collect data in a longitudinal format to determine how changes in adolescents' views of parents relate to changes in academic engagement and/or grades. Also, using longitudinal data would allow researchers to better assess the direction of the relationships between the variables. For example, it is possible that better grades could predict better academic motivation or educational aspirations. As youth make better grades, they may become more engaged or setting higher educational goals.

Also, Latinos from different backgrounds were collapsed into one pan-ethnic group (i.e., Latinos). There may be differences in Mexican American, Salvadoran

American, Guatemalan American that may influence the results. Similarly, differences between generation statuses and gender of the adolescents were not examined. Future studies should examine intragroup differences.

Implications

Regardless of the limitations listed above, the results of this study suggest some implications for practitioners and educators working with Latino adolescents and/or their families. It would be beneficial for educators of adolescents to encourage parental involvement in general effective parenting such as demonstrating parental support and monitoring youth's activities. Educators could send newsletters home to parents emphasizing the importance of being warm and nurturing, but also keeping track of their children's activities. The newsletters could give techniques to parents such as using family mealtime to ask adolescents what they did today in a warm and nurturing manner. Family life educators (e.g., parent educators) should continue to promote these effective parenting qualities in classes, workshops, and parenting literature.

Educators should also encourage parents to set high aspirations for their children. This could also be done through newsletters informing parents about the benefits of higher education as well as strategies for setting high educational goals for their children. In addition, teachers and/or school counselors could emphasize these same messages in assemblies for parents or parent-teacher conferences.

Mental health professionals working with adolescents who are struggling academically could work with parents to help them be more supportive, monitor their youth, and set high educational goals for their youth. Also, mental health practitioners can help the adolescents recognize supportive gestures by parents and to be responsive to

parents who try to learn about their activities and friends. This may help adolescents perceive that their parents do care for them and their education.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to examine whether Latino adolescents' perceptions of family capital (i.e., monitoring, support, educational aspirations for their adolescent, and educational attainment from mothers and fathers) were indirectly related to grades through their forms of human capital (i.e., academic self-efficacy, academic motivation, and educational aspirations). In general, the results suggested that family capital could enhance human capital, which ultimately could promote grades (i.e., an indicator of academic achievement). Educators, family life educators, and mental health practitioners can use these results by encouraging Latino mothers and fathers to monitor their children, to support their children, and to set high educational aspirations for their children. Future research should collect data from Latinos in other geographic regions, utilize longitudinal designs, and examine intragroup differences.

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